# TOOL – FAKE NEWS

INFORMATION AND DATA LITERACY > 1.2 EVALUATING DATA, INFORMATION AND DIGITAL CONTENT

| TARGET GROUP | AGE GROUP | PROFICIENCY LEVEL | FORMAT | COPYRIGHT | LANGUAGE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Facilitators | N/A | Level 1 | Preparatory guide | Creative Commons (BY-SA) | English, French |

This document contains background information for facilitators before they run the workshop with participants. It defines what fake news is, how it comes about, its effects and how to sensitize others to it.

| | |
|---|---|
| **General Objective** | Knowledge acquisition |
| **Preparation time for facilitator** | less than 1 hour |
| **Competence area** | 1 - Information and data literacy |
| **Name of author** | Gabrielle Taylor |
| **Resource originally created in** | French |

## WORKSHOP DIRECTIONS

# 1 Definitions

To start, here are a few basic definitions:

- False information. This can have many aims, such as to disparage a politician or political party, damage the reputation of a person or company, or to attempt to undermine an established scientific truth.
- Satire: false information circulated, often with a comic tone, designed to fool or elicit a certain kind of response from the target audience.
- Partisan information (biased): factual but presented to be interpreted in way favourable to the editor's or publishing organisation's agenda.
- Clickbait: false and sensationalised information designed to disingenuously catch attention. These often consist of misleading or even straight up false headlines in order to generate the maximum number of clicks.

**What is fake news?** Fake news is false information, mostly distributed via the internet. It can be presented in the form of an article, an altered image, etc. The term fake news was popularised in 2016 during the Brexit campaign in the UK and Donald Trump's election campaign. Essentially, some journalists framed these events as having links with fake news propagated on social media and online generally. Fake news can appear in different types of media: traditional as well as social, the later referring to those web platforms that allow users to create and share content with the public.

**What is fact checking?** Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter do not verify information spread by users on their platforms. They can therefore be a highly effective vehicle for lies and false information since nothing they host is fact-checked. Users should be vigilant and learn to spot false information. We recommend you see 'Fact Checking'. The term fact-checking refers to a journalistic technique to systematically verify claims made by politicians and emerging from public discourse, as well as information circulating on social media and online generally.

# 2 How to spot fake news

- Verify the source: if a piece of information links back to a website, investigate that site and determine yourself whether it appears reliable.

- Identify the author: does the author exist? what else have they written?
- Read beyond the headline: headlines can be clickbait. Read on for the full story which may often expose the headline as being misleading or false.
- Check the date of the article.
- Is there a humorous tone? There are many sites such as the Onion which publish articles that may appear to be sincere but are in fact satirical.

## 3 How to fight against fake news

There are a large number of national and international initiatives to counter fake news. See here for some fake news laws that have been passed around the word. See also: factcheck.org, Snopes.com, BBC's Reality Check, and Full Fact. Here are some good questions to ask ourselves when considering whether information is reliable:

- Who is the author?
- What is the objective or agenda behind the information?
- What is the nature or background of the site and its publisher?
- What is the site's objective or agenda?
- How is the site presented visually?
- Where is the information reported to have come from?
- From when does the information date?
- Does the information contain incoherent statements?
- What do the comments say?

## 4 Going further

Some videos:

The Dark(er) Side of Media

What is fake news – explained l CBC Kids News

More information: What is 'fake news'? Recent article from a scientific perspective:

Coronavirus misinformation, and how scientists can help to fight it